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The Pride of the Family

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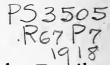
AGNES L. CRIMMINS

Author of "She Knows Better Now," etc.

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
1918



The Pride of the Family

CHARACTERS

(In the order of their appearance.)

MRS. HENRY NEWTON.
HENRY NEWTON, SR.
JOHN NEWTON,
HENRY NEWTON, JR.

their sons.

TIME.—Shortly after the U. S. declaration of war with Germany.

PLACE.—A New England farm.



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The Pride of the Family

SCENE.—Kitchen of the Newton homestead. The scene represents a room which serves the purpose of kitchen, living-room, and dining-room, and its furnishings indicate that its owners come of good old stock. furniture is antique, of good lines, though shabby from long usage. At centre back is door leading out-ofdoors. At R. and L. of door are windows, upon the sills of which are red geraniums. Before window at L. is an old-fashioned rocking-chair with sewing table beside it. On the table is a work-basket in which is seen a partially knitted khaki sleeveless sweater. Before window at R. is a small table upon which are papers, books, etc. At L. C. against wall is a stove with hot oven above. In oven may be seen two or three dishes. On stove is a teakettle and a coffee-pot. At L. of stove is the kitchen sink with its customary fittings. To L., on wall, is a roller towel; a mirror with comb and brush on shelf beneath. Against opposite wall is a dresser with old-fashioned china, and a few pieces of pewter on top. In upper R. corner is a grandfather clock, practical, and marking the time of four o'clock. At U. L. is door leading to wood-shed. Above door at centre back is motto "God Bless Our Home." The back drop represents fertile fields in an early stage of cultivation. At c. of stage is a dining table with one place set. There are three chairs pushed up against table. There may be such other furnishings as would be considered essential to give the room the necessary atmosphere.

(At rise of curtain, MRS. NEWTON, a perfect example

of the simple, loveable New England type of mother, is sitting before window at L. MR. NEWTON, an invalid, is asleep in a wheel-chair at R. The shades have been drawn at window beside him to shut out the sunlight which streams through window at L. On his forehead rests a pair of old-fashioned spectacles. Across his knees is spread a warm shawl. There is silence save for the ticking of the clock, and the deep breathing of Mr. Newton. Mrs. NEWTON finishes the darning of a sock, rolls it up with another, and places on table. She pauses for a brief moment, glances at the clock, out the window. and at MR. NEWTON. Then, keeping her eyes on him, she opens the table drawer softly, and cautiously brings forth a little mass of red and white cloth. She carefully puts the work-basket in front so as to obstruct MR. NEWTON'S view, should he waken suddenly and glance her way. As extra precaution she keeps her work in her lap. She then takes from the drawer a star of blue, and, unfolding her cloth, we see that she is making a service flag. She smiles a little sadly as she takes it up, and smoothing it out, pats it tenderly, and places it on its field of white. She takes a few stitches, keeping her work always out of range of Mr. Newton's vision, and showing a certain guilty nervousness. From off stage comes the sound of wagon wheels. MRS. NEWTON pauses, listens eagerly; then follows a sharp whistle blown twice. She starts up quickly, casting a quick look toward her husband, and unconsciously uttering a warning "Sssh!" conceals her work under the sweater, and hurries out of door at c. back.)

Voice (off stage; jovially). How do, Mis'---

(Mr. Newton shifts uneasily in his chair. Mrs. Newton, passing in front of window at u. l., puts warning finger to lips. Voice dies away. There follows low murmur of voices off stage. Mr. Newton, restless in his sleep, drops shawl from his knees.

MRS. NEWTON reappears in front of window, turns and smiles a motherly good-bye to some one off L., and enters with newspaper and letter. She looks toward her husband, hesitates, then goes toward window at L., quickly opens letter, holds it up to the light and reads, her face lighting up with eagerness as she proceeds. She turns, starts toward MR. NEWTON eagerly, then pauses, thinks, slowly puts letter into her pocket, and returns to her chair and her work. She sews feverishly for a moment, rocking rapidly. Gradually she becomes more quiet and more serious, her work rests in her lap, and her gaze is turned toward the fields outside. A sudden snort of waking from Mr. NEWTON brings her back with a start.)

MRS. NEWTON. Mercy to goodness, father!—be ye awake?

Mr. Newton (grouchy voice). Be I awake! Why don't ye ask me "be I alive"?

MRS. NEWTON (patiently). I kin see ye're that.

MR. NEWTON (shrugging his shoulders and shivering). Bu-r-r-! It's cold in here. That piller hurts my back. Where's the paper? Where's my glasses? What time is it? Ain't John home yet? (Looking toward dining table, irritably.) What's he doin'-

Mrs. Newton (conceals service flag in sweater, and hastens to him). My! My! father! It'd take a centipede to wait on ye, an' answer all yer questions,but (gently tucking shawl about his knees), I dunno's a centipede's got as many tongues as legs, has he?

Mr. Newton. If he had all you women'd be centipedes.

MRS. NEWTON (shaking out and readjusting his pillow). An' all you men'd be terrible dependent on centipedes. (Laugh's softly, and pats his shoulder.)

Mr. Newton. Ye will have the last word, won't ye? MRS. NEWTON (puts her finger to her lips, and smiles upon him tolerantly, rolls up the shades, and turns his chair nearer the window). There, the sun'll cheer ye up. Mr. NEWTON. Humph!—What time is it?

MRS. NEWTON (occupying herself for a moment with

the geraniums). It's a little past four o'clock.

MR. NEWTON. Four o'clock! Where's John? Ain't he home yet? (Glancing from dining table to stove.)

MRS. NEWTON. No,—not yet.

MR. NEWTON (annoyed). What's he doin' 'til this hour of the day?

MRS. NEWTON (hesitating). Why,—I s'pose he's busy,

father.

Mr. Newton. Busy! Does it take all day to sell twenty pounds of butter an' ten dozen eggs! When I had the use o' my limbs I had my stuff all sold and wuz back in time for dinner.

Mrs. Newton (soothingly). You wuz allus spry, father. (Tentatively.) P'r'aps John has somethin'—

some business to 'tend to.

Mr. Newton. What business? His business is right here,-not loafin' or lally-gaggin' 'round town-and

neglectin' the farm.

Mrs. Newton. You can't say, father, that John has ever neglected his work. Only the other day ye said ye never see'd the fields lookin' so well for this time o' year.

Mr. Newton (grumblingly). That's because the

weather's been fine.

MRS. NEWTON. Now, now, father! Give John his due;—give him credit.

MR. NEWTON. Humph! Guess you can save me that

trouble.

MRS. NEWTON. John's a good boy,—a good faithful son. (Turns away from window with a sigh, and comes down stage; pauses in thought.) It don't seem as if we could git along without him.

MR. NEWTON. An' Henry's a good, smart son. Don't

ye fergit that!

MRS. NEWTON (with a sigh). Yes, Henry's a good

boy, too. I hope he'll turn out as well as John.

Mr. NEWTON. As well as John! What be ye a-talkin' 'bout, woman! He'll be the pride of the family.

MRS. NEWTON. I hope so. We've made sacrifices

enough—to give him a good education.

MR. NEWTON. He's got brains—an' "go,"—he has.

Mrs. Newton. Yes, Henry's got brains, but sometimes I'm afraid of the "go."

Mr. Newton. Ye got to have "go" ter git anywhere

in this world.

Mrs. Newton. Sometimes it's the "go" that takes ye past what's best fer ye. A little "stay" is good now an' then. Henry seems ter crave excitement.

Mr. Newton. He'll steady down.

MRS. NEWTON. I hope so. (Going across to table and taking up the sweater and beginning to knit.) But—after bein' away four years at college—with so much goin' on—seems 's if 'twould be kinder hard for him to settle down to our quiet life again.

MR. NEWTON. What ye talkin' 'bout, woman? How many times have I got to tell ye Henry's goin' out into the world and make a name for himself—to be a big

lawyer-or somethin'.

Mrs. Newton (shaking her head sadly). We can't tell much in these terrible times of war an' trouble what

our boys'll do.

Mr. Newton (petulantly). There ye go again—like a scared hen! Don't know whether to go up a tree—or over a fence—or spin 'round in the middle of the road! Jest because other countries are crazy 'nough to go to war, does that mean that we got to go in, too, and get a bloody nose? Talk sense, woman.

MRS. NEWTON. But we're at war, father. It's been declared. The young men must stand back o' their

country—(with a sigh) I s'pose.

Mr. Newton. You s'pose rubbish! Don't ye know that's only another kind o' letter to frighten them Germans into leavin' us alone? Ye notice they hain't done nothin' since the President told 'em we'd lick 'em if they didn't keep out of our way. That's all he did it for,—and that's all he's got to do. They know we mean business now. We'll hear nothin' more from them.

Mrs. Newton. I dunno. They're askin' the young

men to enlist.

MR. NEWTON. Of course, they got to go on makin' a show of fight. Besides, it's a good way ter get the vagrants off the streets.

Mrs. Newton. It's our best young men they're askin' to enlist.—Oh, it don't seem 's if the dear Lord sent our boys into the world for this purpose—to be shot down.

Mr. NEWTON. Waal, He didn't—nuther.

MRS. NEWTON. Then why does He let it go on? (Her fingers working convulsively over service flag in her lap.) I s'pose it's right,—an' we can't see it yet,—but—oh, it don't seem 's if I could give up my boy!

Mr. Newton. Who's asked ye to?—What's the matter with ye, anyway? Nobody's got to go to war that don't want to. An' nobody's goin' from this house. (*Impatiently*.) Where's my glasses? Where's the paper? Ain't it come yet? What—

Mrs. Newton. There ye go again, father. Your glasses be in the usual place,—a-nappin' on yer forehead. Mr. Newton. Humph! How'd they git there?

(Adjusting them.)

MRS. NEWTON. An' yer paper's there beside ye. (Settling back.) Now you read me the news, an' we'll fergit all about the war an' have a real nice time.

MR. NEWTON. Humph! If you'll fergit it we'll fergit it. I never know any one so set on talkin' 'bout it as you be. Anybody'd think ye had to go yerself.

(Mrs. Newton sighs, as Mr. Newton opens the paper.)

Mrs. Newton. I wish I could—instead of these fine young boys.

Mr. Newton. There ye go!

MRS. NEWTON. I won't, father. Read! Read!

(Begins knitting vigorously.)

MR. NEWTON (looks across at her over the top of his paper). What ye doin' there?

MRS. NEWTON (with guilty start, hiding service flag,

and taking up sweater). Nuthin'-jest knittin'.

Mr. Newton. What is that thing? Mrs. Newton. Jest a—sweater.

Mr. Newton (testily). Who be ye makin' it fer?

Mrs. Newton (hesitating). Fer — They're askin'. us women to make these warm things fer the soldiers.

Mr. Newton. Ye'd much better be knittin' fer yer

own family.

MRS. NEWTON (looking out of window, sadly). Who knows-but mebbe I be.

Mr. Newton (sharply). What's that?

Mrs. Newton. Nuthin'! Nuthin', father. I—I guess all of us women-folks feel like 's if we wuz mothers of

every boy that goes out.

MR. NEWTON (shaking out his paper). Humph! Centipedes again. Silly, senseless centipedes! (Shrugs his shoulders, and buries himself in his paper. There is silence for a moment, MRS. NEWTON looking as if she wanted to say something, fingering the letter in her pocket, and yet not daring.) There ain't no news in the paper. All about this blasted war business.

Mrs. Newton (timidly; after a moment's hesitation).

All the young men seem to want to go.

MR. NEWTON (without looking up from his paper). Go where?

Mrs. Newton. Into the—army.

Mr. Newton. Young fools!

Mrs. Newton. They're drillin' on the common every afternoon.

Mr. Newton. They'd better be about their work. Mrs. Newton (hesitating, and tentatively). I—I s'pose it's only natural they'd want to do their duty?

Mr. Newton (fiercely). Duty! Duty! What about their duty at home,—to their parents?

Mrs. Newton (gently). Sometimes we have to think beyond ourselves, father. Our boys belong to their

country first of all—(with deep sigh), I s'pose.

Mr. Newton (in disgust). You talk jest like the newspapers! Anybody'd think you wanted to send our own sons over there to be cut up into dog meat for them dirty Germans.

Mrs. Newton. Don't, father! Don't!

MR. NEWTON. Talk sense, then. (Returns to his paper.) Can't find any news in here. It's nuthin' but war, war, war.

MRS. NEWTON (after a pause; timidly). If—if the boys should want to go, father, I—I s'pose we wouldn't have any right to hold 'em back?

MR. NEWTON (growing more and more impatient). Right! We have every right! What would become of

us-me a helpless cripple-and you, a woman!

Mrs. Newton. The dear Lord would take care of us—somehow.

Mr. Newton. The dear Lord seems to have 'bout all He kin do waitin' on that damned old Kaiser!

Mrs. Newton (horrified). Henry!

Mr. Newton. You probably think He'd drop down from heaven and do our plantin' and hoein' an' harvestin'.

MRS. NEWTON. Henry, that's not a nice way to talk

of our dear Lord.

Mr. Newton. It's jest as sensible as the way you take on about this war. What do you know 'bout it? What do these young jackasses that are a-drillin' on the common know 'bout it? It's the deviltry of the thing that's got into their blood. What does — (With quick suspicion.) See here, where's John?

MRS. NEWTON (confused, and a little terrified). Why,

I—I —

Mr. Newton (sitting up straight in his chair; with quick comprehension). That's where he is! A-drillin'! (Mrs. Newton starts, and quickly bends over her work.) Ain't he? (She doesn't reply.) Ain't he, I say?

MRS. NEWTON (hesitating, and frightened). Why, I—mebbe he is—mebbe he ain't. (Breathlessly.) I—

I don't know, father.

MR. NEWTON (sternly). Ye do know, Marthy,—an' ye're tryin' to hide it from me. That's what all this talk about war is for! That's what all this knittin' is for!

(Working himself into a fury. Mrs. Newton rises in anxiety and goes to him, accidentally dropping service flag on floor.)

Mrs. Newton. Don't, father. Don't git so worked up. Mebbe he won't have to go. I wuz only thinkin' we ought to be prepared—in case—

MR. NEWTON (catching sight of flag. At same time noise is heard off stage. MRS. NEWTON turns her head

to listen). What's that?

MRS. NEWTON (going quickly to window, and peering off R.). That must be John now—(excitedly) or is it—? It's John. (Turning appealingly to MR. NEWTON.) Don't scold him, father.

MR. NEWTON (sternly). What's that thing on the

floor, Marthy?

MRS. NEWTON (catching sight of flag, with suppressed cry, snatches it up and guiltily rolls it in her apron). Oh!—Why!—It's nuthin'. (Quickly turns toward stove.) I—I'm 'fraid John's dinner's all dried up.

Mr. Newton (more sternly). Marthy, give that here.

MRS. NEWTON. It's—it's nuthin', father. MR. NEWTON. Then why are ye hidin' it?

Mrs. Newton (pleadingly). No,—it ain't nuthin' but a piece o' cloth.

Mr. Newton. Lemme see. Give it here.

Mrs. Newton (giving it to him reluctantly). It's

only jest a little work I wuz doin'-

MR. NEWTON (holding it up, and examining it for a moment). What's that star fer?—Red, white and blue.

(Looking questioningly at her.)

Mrs. Newton. Oh, father, give it ter me. I didn't want ye to see it. I—thought mebbe it'd be kind of a comfort—in case—

MR. NEWTON (with sudden comprehension). It's one o' them flags o' service the papers hev been writin' about. Ye're making it fer——

(John, a splendid type of young man dressed in the rough clothes of the rural districts, bursts into room through door at U. R., holding forward a gun.)

JOHN (eagerly, in hushed voice). Mother, we drilled with ——

MRS. NEWTON (trying to stand in front of him, to hide gun from father). Hush, John!

(John, seeing his father, puts gun behind him.)

Mr. Newton (angrily). Heh! So you've got somethin' to hide behind yer petticoats, too! (Looking accusingly from mother to son.) Both on ye—contrivin' against me!

MRS. NEWTON (pleadingly). No, father, no. We—JOHN (taking in the situation, comes forward, and plants the gun firmly and proudly in front of him, facing his father fearlessly). I have nothing to hide, father.

Mr. Newton. What's the meanin' o' that gun, then? John (quietly, but firmly). Father, I want to join

the army.

Mr. Newton (looking at Mrs. Newton, accusingly).

I knew it!

JOHN (to Mrs. Newton). You've told him, mother. Mrs. Newton. No, dear,—not exactly,—but he suspects.

Mr. Newton (with solemn sternness). Marthy, I never thought the day would come when I'd have to

suspect you.

MRS. NEWTON. Oh, Henry, I didn't mean to! I wuz never so put to it before.

Mr. Newton. After all these years.

JOHN. Don't blame mother, father. I asked her not to say anything to you until it was all settled—that I was really needed—and that—

MR. NEWTON (vehemently). Needed! Needed! Don't ye think ye are needed here! What about me? What

about your mother? Hev ye thought o' that?

JOHN (quietly). Yes, father, first of all. An' I won't leave you until there's some one to take my place.

MR. NEWTON (with increasing anger). Who's to take

yer place? An' who's got the money to pay him?

JOHN. I'm hoping Henry is going to take care of you and mother.

Mr. Newton. Henry! Hen-

John. Mother wrote him.

Mrs. Newton (drawing letter from her pocket). An' he's comin', dear.

JOHN (taking letter, eagerly). You got an answer?

Mrs. Newton. This afternoon.

(JOHN opens and eagerly reads letter.)

MR. NEWTON (furiously). You wrote to Henry to leave college!—to give up his education!

Mrs. Newton. Father, dear, John -

JOHN. Let me explain, mother.

MR. NEWTON (banging his fist on the arm of his

chair). How far has this thing gone?

JOHN (quietly). Father, I've been following this war pretty closely in the papers ever since it started. The injustice, the brutality, the barbarianism of it has made my blood boil,—and I longed to get into it,—but I felt my place was here with you and mother—and helping to keep Henry in college.

MR. NEWTON. An' now ye want to leave us-an'

take him out of college!

JOHN. Now that our country is in it, too, it seems to me my duty—and the duty of every able-bodied man to come forward and stand behind our flag. I talked it over with mother -

Mr. Newton. Sneakin' 'round the corner! Why

didn't ye come out into the open like a man?

JOHN. Because I didn't want to trouble you until it was all settled. (Consulting letter.) Now Henry's coming home. Says he may be here almost as soon as the letter. So it's all right to talk about it. You want me to go, don't you, father?

Mrs. Newton. Of course he does, dear.

MR. NEWTON (struggling to rise, and sinking back). Oh, why am I so helpless that I got to set here an' let you two ride over me an' do what ye want! (Desperately.) Marthy, you send a letter to Henry right away, an' tell him not to come home. I won't have it!

MRS. NEWTON (looking helplessly from John to MR.

Newton). But—father—I—I can't.
Mr. Newton. You do as I tell ye!

JOHN (quietly). He's coming home to-day, father.

Mr. Newton. To-day!

JOHN (consulting letter). Says he may be here almost as soon as this letter the ground a second profit good town

MR. NEWTON (pounding arms of chair with fists). Oh, was a man ever so tried? You two doin' this unbeknownst to me! To make him give up his education

that we've paid dear for!

JOHN (to MRS. NEWTON). We'll have to tell him, mother. (To Mr. Newton, soothingly.) He wanted to surprise you, father. He says (reading): "My college days are over. I have my degree, and—but never mind. You'll know the rest when you see me. Don't tell Dad. I have a big surprise for him-that'll make him proud of his Henry, Junior." (To Mr. NEWTON.) That's his degree.

MRS. NEWTON. Too bad we had to tell you, father.

Don't let on that you know.

JOHN. Then it's settled—I can go?

MR. NEWTON. It's settled you stay right here,—and it's settled you put down that gun—(John draws it to him a little closer) and that you go back to your work, and git all them blasted notions about joinin' the army out o' your head.

JOHN (quietly, but firmly). But, father, it's my duty

to go.

Mr. Newton (fiercely). Who says it's your duty?

JOHN. The papers, the recruiting officer down in the town;—our President says so,—and my own heart tells me so.

Mr. Newton (scornfully). Yes, your own belly says so! Let them German pig-stickers fill it full of bullets, an' I guess you'd sing another tune!

MRS. NEWTON. Oh, father, don't talk like that!
MR. NEWTON. It's the only way to talk to git any
common sense into you—an' him! (Turning upon
JOHN.) This war ain't of our makin',—an' there's no reason why it should be of our unmakin'.

JOHN. There's every reason, father! What about the butchering of little children, and helpless women-

and old men?

Mr. Newton. They ain't Americans.

JOHN. Does that make any difference in the justice or injustice of it? If a poor immigrant woman were walking along the road here, doing no harm to anybody, and a brute of a man came along and insulted and threatened to kill her, would you ask if he were an American or not before you struck him down?

Mr. Newton (doggedly). 'Twouldn't happen here.

JOHN. Does it make any difference where it happens? If such things are happening anywhere on this earth, isn't it the duty of strong men and strong countries to rush in and help—to protect the weak?

Mr. Newton. It ain't our affair.

JOHN. It is our affair, too, father. What would you think of a man who would stand by and see a beast come in here and murder mother?

Mrs. Newton (horrified). Oh, John! Mr. Newton. That's a different matter.

John. Because it strikes home,—yes. Well, this should strike home,—to any man who's got a heart, or any sense of honor and duty. They're killing our own people, too,—blowing up our ships, blowing up our factories, blowing up our bridges—everything they can. They're calling us cowards and money-grabbers. Should we sit by and do nothing;—turn the other cheek, and let 'em hit again? Not much! It's time to stand up and show the stuff we Americans are made of! I tell you, father, I want to show 'em we're throat-grabbers of such beasts as they are. I want to be among the first to run a bayonet into 'em!

Mrs. Newton (turning away in anguish; under her

breath). Oh, my boy,—my little boy!

JOHN. I want to drive 'em into a mud hole filled with their own stinking blood, and see 'em choke in it, and drown like rats!

MRS. NEWTON. Don't, John, don't! I can't stand it! (Wringing her hands.) I can't! (To MR. NEWTON.) Oh, it don't seem 's if I could let him go!—When I think of the terrible things—

MR. NEWTON. Waal, ye ain't got to,—fer he ain't a-goin'. (John draws up a little defiantly.) Put down

that gun!

JOHN (with determination). I must go, father,—just as soon as Henry comes home.

Mr. Newton (vehemently). That's just why you

ain't a-goin'! Do you think I'm goin' to bring him back here to live on a farm—with a college education?

JOHN (quietly). I don't believe that'll hurt the farm. MR. NEWTON. He's got brains an' ambitions. He's goin' to make a place fer himself out in the world, and (turning fiercely on JOHN) you ain't a-goin' to tie him

down here—an' spoil his chances!

JOHN. What about my chances? He's had his. (With determination.) It's my turn now. I've given up to him all my life—because you made me. If there ever was a hard job to do I had to do it; if there ever was anything to be given up I had to do it. I wanted to go to college far more than he did, but I didn't talk about it because I didn't see how you could send me; but when Henry put up a kick and said he wanted to go you were proud of him, and said John could carry on the farm without him, and help to keep him there. Well, I have worked to keep him there for four years, and you can't say I've complained or shirked. I'm glad he's had that chance, and I think I've earned mine now. want to join the army, father, I want to do my share in this war. I want to do it more than anything else in this world. This is my chance,—and my right—and my duty,—and it's your duty to send me. I must go!

MR. NEWTON (with dogged determination). No son

o' mine goes to this war-with my consent!

JOHN. Would you rather see me drafted—forced to go?

Mr. Newton. You won't hev to be drafted. There

won't be no such thing.

JOHN. The recruiting officer says it will come to

that,—if we don't enlist.

MR. NEWTON. He's paid ter fill yer heads with that nonsense. Let him gather up the tramps and vagrants—an' send 'em over there.

John. That isn't the sort of man we want to represent our country. And it's a pretty sneaking patriot

who waits for the draft anyway.

Mr. Newton. Waal, ye won't hev to be drafted. You've got dependents.

JOHN. Only one son can make that excuse. Would you rather it would be Henry?

MR. NEWTON (startled). No,-no, they shan't take

Henry.

JOHN. Then isn't it better to let me go in an honorable way? I'm the older son, and ——

Mrs. Newton (pleadingly). Yes, father!

Mr. Newton (suspiciously). No,—I won't be talked into it.

Mrs. Newton. John thinks it's his duty. We

shouldn't stand in his way.

MR. NEWTON. It's his duty to stay right here, an'. (sternly, to JOHN) here you stay!

Joнn. No, father. I've made up my mind.

Mr. Newton. You'd go agin me? John. I hope to persuade you.

Mrs. Newton. We mustn't think of ourselves, father. We must try to look at it as John sees it. There's sometimes a higher duty than that of son to parents. There's ——

Mr. Newton. You keep quiet! You've done enough mischief—fillin' his head with fool ideas,—makin' this thing—(shaking service flag at her) writin' to Henry behind my back—tryin' to make that poor boy give up everythin'! I tell ye I won't hev it! I won't hev it!

(He pauses in anger. Off stage is heard the whistling of "Over There." All three pause, turn, and listen. Almost instantly appears outside of window, at L., Henry, his head uncovered, swinging along with a debonair, careless swagger. He pauses for a moment, looks in, and waves his hand gaily.)

MRS. NEWTON. It's Henry! (Goes quickly to door.)
MR. NEWTON (peering out, eagerly). Henry?

(John takes an eager step forward.)

Mrs. Newton (opening door; holding out her arms).

Henry, my boy!

HENRY (submitting gaily to embrace). Hello, mother. How are you? (Swaggers in. He is a hand-

some, merry, care-free lad of about twenty-two years, dressed in a long tan coat buttoned to the throat. All that is visible of his dress is a pair of tan shoes with military leggings. Under his arm is tucked a military cap, and he carries a swagger stick. From his mother, he turns to his father, swaggers over, and shakes hands, Mr. Newton looking up at him in childlike joy.) How's the Grand Old Man?

MR. NEWTON (clinging to his hand). No better,

Henry,—no better.

HENRY (gaily). Nonsense, Dad,—we'll have you doing the fox trot with mother yet. (Turns to John, with a merry laugh.) Hello, Jack. How goes it?

JOHN (taking his hand, with a strong, sincere hand. shake). It was mighty good of you to come so soon, Henry. You don't -

HENRY (with a little laugh of embarrassment). Not

a bit of it.

JOHN. You don't know how I appreciate it.

HENRY (looking at gun). Why has Johnnie got his gun? Not shooting out of season, eh?

JOHN. I'm prepared, you see. Been drilling -MR. NEWTON (vehemently). Henry, I won't hev ye give up yer career.

HENRY. Who says I'm going to, Dad?

Mr. Newton (pointing to Mrs. Newton and to JOHN). They want ye to,—while John there goes and makes a fool o' himself with all his blasted notions about patriotism—and duty. His duty is right here.

John (to Henry, apologetically). Father doesn't

seem to realize the meaning of this war.

Mrs. Newton. It's real good of you, Henry, to come

an' take care of us while John's away.

Mr. Newton. He ain't goin' away, I tell ye. I won't hev Henry tied down here. We've paid dear for his education, and now he's got to be free to make the most of it.

HENRY (patting Mr. NEWTON on the shoulder). Good

JOHN (to Mr. NEWTON). It will be for only a little while, father. (To HENRY.) I've told him it would be only a question of time before one of us would have to go, and how much better it is to go now as an honorable man.

Mr. Newton. Don't ye let him talk ye into it, Henry. Henry. He won't have to, Dad, for it's all settled.

(John breathes a sigh of relief. Mrs. Newton smiles sympathetically and sadly.)

Mr. Newton. Ye mean ye'll give up everything? Henry. Didn't I tell you I had a big surprise that would make you proud of your Henry, Junior?

Mr. Newton. Yes, but ----

Henry (quickly unbuttoning and removing his coat). Well, behold! Here it is! (He stands forth dressed in the khaki military uniform bearing insignia of quartermaster sergeant. He puts on his military cap, and takes up, and twirls jauntily his swagger stick; salutes, and looks to the others for exclamations of surprise. John gives a start backward, and stands as if stunned.) The problem is solved.

MRS. NEWTON (with dawning comprehension). Oh,

why,—Henry! John?

JOHN (in dull, hard voice). Where'd you get that

uniform?

HENRY. Uncle Sam, the father of our country,—and incidentally of the best tailor in town. How do you like it? Some fit, eh? (Turning about like a model.)

Mr. Newton (peering through, and over his glasses).

It ain't—a soldier's suit!

Henry (laughing gaily). Good guess, Dad. (Pulling down coat, and striking military attitude.) A credit to my figger, eh?—and to my country. (John braces himself against table for support. Henry takes bill from pocket, and tosses it to John.) Sorry I've got to pass the bill over to you, Jackie boy,—but the truth of the matter is I'm strapped, busted, dead broke. You don't mind this—for patriotism—and little brother? You see I've saved you from service.

JOHN (sinking into chair beside table; bitterly).

Saved me!

(Mrs. Newton, unconsciously, moves toward him in sympathy.)

MRS. NEWTON. Henry, you haven't? Oh, no! MR. NEWTON (sharply). Ye hain't—enlisted, boy! HENRY. Another good guess, Dad. You always were good at conundrums.

JOHN (bitterly). And this is the surprise!

HENRY. Right you are.

MRS. NEWTON. But, Henry, I wrote ye John wanted

to go!

HENRY. Too late. It's the early bird that gets the worm. (Swelling up with pride.) Behold Cock Robin! Didn't I tell you, Dad, you'd be proud of your baby boy?

Mr. Newton. But —

Mrs. Newton. We-we thought you meant you'd

got your diploma ----

HENRY. Degree, mother. Diploma is very plebeian. (With sweeping movement of his hand over his uniform.) This is how I got it. Killed two birds with one stone—to change the metaphor.

Mr. Newton. I can't let ye go, Henry!

HENRY. Got to go, Dad. Every reason for it. Can't get my degree unless I go.

MR. NEWTON. You mean they'd force ye to go-at

college!

HENRY. Practically that. You see college has been pretty much of a goulash this year—on account of the war. We knew it was coming;—nobody could work;—air full of gunpowder. We got the idea that degrees were going to be passed 'round on a silver platter, with a dish of ice-cream thrown in, when June came. Nobody's been doing any work. Last month we got the gas bomb that only those going into military service would get their little sheepskins;—that's Greek for degrees, you know—free, gratis, for nothing; and the other chaps would have to heave to, and pass the exams. Well, what was a fellow to do? Choice of two things: flunk, or cuddle up to Uncle Sam. Tight place, eh? But not for little Henry! He had a good pal whose dad has some pull at the inside ropes; and he landed us each a

neat little berth. Mine you see—quartermaster sergeant—just for the asking! Some luck, eh, Dad? (Strutting about, and singing softly.) "So pack up your troubles in your old kit bag," etc.

Mr. Newton. An' let your education be wasted! No,

Henry, ye can't go. I've planned big things fer ye.

HENRY. This is the way to get 'em, Dad. You don't seem to realize what a chance this is. Why, it's one in a thousand! The Quartermaster Department is the greatest training school in the world—for business. Think of the experience—and the men I'll work with! and the chances of promotion! First sergeant now—\$81 per month. Next, second lieutenant, \$1,700 a year. That I've been promised as soon as we get over there. But that's a secret. Then comes first lieutenant, \$2,000; captain, \$2,400, and so on up the line. Why, Dad, in a year or so I may be sporting a brigadier general's outfit, and drawing \$6,000 plunks per annum!

MR. NEWTON (credulous, and much impressed). Is

that so?

HENRY. What more could you wish for your lad?

Mr. Newton. But the danger?

HENRY (laughing). My only danger will be from overeating. Commissary Department: all the goodies, and none of the privations. Uniform, stripes, bars, authority, U. S. cash, etc.

JOHN. So that's all the war means to you?

Henry. Oh, no! There are other compensations. I've been wanting to see a bit of the world. It rounds off a fellow's education, you know. Now a free trip to Europe, and—(slyly, to John, sotto-voce) Jackie boy, they tell me the French girls are pretty lassies. (Taking off his cap, and walking across stage, as if talking to some one by his side, with ingratiating smile.)

"Bon jour, my pretty maid,
Ou allez-vous so vite?
Come, prenez une promenade with me,
Et je vous aime tout suite."

(Laughs merrily. John rises in disgust and anger, and

goes to window at L.) Oh, you old Puritan, Jack! How's that, mother? A poet and a Frenchman?

MRS. NEWTON (puzzled). I don't know a word you

said, Henry.

HENRY (laughing). That comes of a college education. I said I might bring you home a "Parlez-vous" for a daughter-in-law.

Mrs. Newton. When you marry, Henry, I hope it

won't be any such heathen.

HENRY (laughs, then turns seriously to MR. NEWTON). No, but really, Dad, don't you see there's everything to be gained, and nothing to be lost?

MR. NEWTON (reluctantly). Wa-al, it does look a

little different, but ----

Henry (pushing his arguments). Now, here are the reasons for going. (Enumerating them on his fingers.) First: I can't get my degree unless I go. Second: By getting in early I fare better. Third: Quartermaster's Department is the safest. Fourth: It's the best-preparation for business—for my future. Fifth: Advantages of travel: All expenses paid. Sixth: I get more money out of it than anything else I could go into. Seventh: Think of the glory I add to the family name: Sergeant Newton; Lieutenant Newton; (making ascending movement of arm) Captain Newton; (standing on tiptoes, in whisper) Major Newton. Pretty long list, eh? Now, what is there against?

(Folds his arms, and looks at others.)

Mr. Newton. Ye might a-waited.

HENRY. And be drafted!

Mr. Newton. It'll never come to that?

HENRY. Ah, yes, it will. I have inside dope on that subject. The draft is going through this summer. Then where would I be? No, Dad, "seize your opportunities" is a pretty good motto. I'm out for big game; and, at the present time, the war's the big game. It's the wise lad who gets in early while the plums are being passed! (Pulling down his coat, looking himself over complacently, twirling his swagger stick.) Oh, what a good boy am I! (Sings snatch of "Over There.")

Mrs. Newton. But, Henry, I wrote ye John wanted to go. He felt it his duty.

JOHN. Oh, mother, what's the use?

HENRY (magnanimously). Well, you see I've saved him.

JOHN (his voice choking with pent-up emotion). Saved me! Saved me from the greatest privilege a man could have!

HENRY (surprised). Well, listen to that! (Quizzically.) Why, Jack, old man, you don't mean to say you really wanted to go?

MRS. NEWTON. He'd set his heart on it.

HENRY. Well, upon my ----

JOHN. You might at least have written to find out.

HENRY. Why—I never thought of it.

John (bitterly). No, never thought of it! Never

thought of anybody but yourself!

HENRY. Oh, I say, don't be peevish! (To MR. NEWTON.) I never thought of old Jack as ever being anything but a farmer.

JOHN. Even a farmer can sometimes have hopes—

and plans!

HENRY. But you're the bread winner, Jack.

JOHN. Who has made me the bread winner? And who has been your bread winner for the last four years? Doesn't that arouse any feeling of consideration—or responsibility? Isn't this your chance to do something in return?

HENRY. I'm making the most of my opportunities.

What more ----

JOHN. For your own gains. What does enlisting mean to you? The pleasure money and glory you get out of it! No thought of duty—or willingness to sacrifice!

HENRY. I'm offering my time—and my ability.

JOHN. For greater value received! That's not being a soldier or a patriot. That's being a grafter—and you know it!

Henry. Oh, come, John, high heroics are all very well for the public, but in the bosom of the family let's face the facts. I go as an officer—into a safe job—

with pull, and every chance of promotion. If you go it will be as a common soldier into the trenches—and you'd probably have your head pinked off at the first whack. Then what earthly good would you be?

JOHN. I would at least have done my duty as a man. I'd die with the self-respect of having given my life with

no selfish thoughts of reward.

HENRY. And you'd leave me here to hide my light under a bushel of potatoes for the rest of my life. Merci beaucoup! A man owes it to himself, to his family and to his country to make the most of himself. That's my stand.

MR. NEWTON. And it's the right one! You go, lad, and we'll be proud of you.

(Mrs. Newton sighs, and goes to John.)

HENRY (going to his father, and shaking hands). I'm mighty glad you understand, Dad. We must do what we're best fitted for. Now being a farmer is being a soldier. Jack can do his bit right here.

Mr. Newton. That's right.

Henry. While I ——

(Falls into low-toned conversation with Mr. NEWTON.)

Mrs. Newton (to John). Don't take it so hard, dear.

JOHN (turning away his head to hide his emotion). It's all right, mother.

MRS. NEWTON. Perhaps it's all for the best.

JOHN. Perhaps so.

MRS. NEWTON. Ye know, dear, the greatest heroes are often those who stay at home, and do the duty nearest their own door.

JOHN (starting off L.). Yes, I know. (His hand on the door latch, turns and tries to smile at her.) It's all right, mother. Don't you worry. [Exit.

MRS. NEWTON (looking after him, affectionately). It's a sight o' comfort to me to hev ye, John. (Turns; then catching sight of dinner in oven.) John, ye ain't had yer dinner.

HENRY (wheeling around). Dinner! Who said dinner? I'm half starved.

MR. NEWTON. Here, mother, git the boy some dinner. MRS. NEWTON (closing door with a sigh). Yes, dear. HENRY. I'll begin my commissary duties now. (Commanding tone.) 'Tention! Bring on the mess!

MRS. NEWTON (taking things out of oven). Yes, dear,—but it's no mess. (Bringing things to table.) It was a real nice dinner four hours ago. (Henry laughs.)

MR. NEWTON (shaking out service flag). An', Marthy, we'll hang the flag for Henry.

(Mrs. Newton raises a hand of remonstrance, then quickly drops it.)

MRS. NEWTON. Yes, dear.

MR. NEWTON. It'll be a comfort—while he's gone. (Passing it to HENRY.) Here, boy, hang it here at the window—where I can allus see it. (HENRY fastens the flag, singing, at the same time, a snatch of "Keep the Home Fires Burning.") We're goin' to be proud of him, Marthy.

MRS. NEWTON. Yes, dear.

(Wipes her eyes quickly, and turns toward the stove.)

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